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'Super secret' pledge is disclosed

BY A WASHINGTON TIMES STAFF WRITER

The Reagan administration has made public a new agreement that officials must sign if they get access to "super secrets" — a pledge to submit anything they write about official doings for advance censorship.

This agreement must be signed by all officials who are cleared to receive ultra-secret information, called "sensitized compartmented information," or SCI. A Justice Department official described such information yesterday as being "super-classified."

"It is much more sensitive than top secret," said the official, who gave reporters a background briefing with an understanding that he would not be identified.

Hordes of government officials have clearance to get classified information, he said, noting for example, 2,000 FBI officials and 500 officials in other branches of the Justice Department. Many of them have access to top secrets.

But the number with SCI clearance is classified, he said.

The SCI agreement applies to everyone in the executive department who gets SCI clearance, including Cabinet members and CIA directors, but not President Reagan or Vice President Bush.

The agreement is part of a job contract and the president and vice president got their jobs through elections, the briefer said.

The Reagan administration has used a modified form of the SCI agreement since 1981. Before that, only the CIA, the National Security Agency and the Defense Intelligence Agency required such agreements.

The new agreement form was developed in response to an order President Reagan issued last March 11 that secret information be handled in stricter fashion. Also, officials must take lie detector tests in investigations of leaks.

However, the Justice Department official said the agreement is aimed mainly at writings and speeches that are prepared in advance — not leaks.

"By nature, it is not aimed at oral disclosures," the briefer said. "Justice recognizes that oral disclosure is different. But if it is prepared in advance, it must be submitted."

"There is not a lot we can do about anonymous leaks," he added. "That is a different set of problems."

Writings that are covered include books, magazine articles, letters to the editor and speeches made from prepared texts, he said.